What differences in circumstances existed that might affect nutritional level? On the one hand were relatively isolated nuclear families, which we estimated as 15-20% of the families, living in tiny separate cottages.[1] Usually with inadequate or no land, they earned an irregular income by hiring themselves out for farm or other work. At the other extreme, in a hamlet-like cluster of dwellings, lived a closely affiliated group of kin. A senior couple more or less headed the married sisters, brothers, or children, maybe with a hired man, or family that as autonomous households cooperated amicably in economic and domestic tasks. We estimated these as 20-25% of the Bang Chan families. The larger social unit, having more hands to produce, and to share tasks, was better able to provide good food and general health care to its members, than a small isolated family. Four problems more easily handled by the larger group were household chores and child-care, farming, borrowing, and earning money.

Young children had to be constantly tended lest they fall into the water, the fire, or under the buffalo's feet. They never entered the fields during work. Fishing and gathering of water plants was complicated because in boats, small children had to be held. Where there were but two parents and young children, one parent could not do many things until the other came home. Perhaps neither partner could stay away long enough to get a big batch of fish or greens from the canal, or go to the store. Cooking was simplified, or food might be prepared once a day only. Respite came only when the first born was able to help oversee a younger child, sometimes staying home from school to do so. Where the adult cooperative group was larger, movement was freer. All the strong adults could work in the fields or at a job, confident that the home was well tended. They came home to a well-prepared meal, ready when they wanted it. Such households had more fresh fish because farm work could be completed sooner, hence more persons could devote themselves to fishing. Some physically able members could even be spared and financed to go beyond the required four grades of elementary school.

Plowing could be done by a man and wife, but for both transplanting and harvesting which had to be done within a few days, large groups were necessary. Two patterns of auxiliary group labor prevailed: reciprocal cooperative work, and hiring of labor.

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1. Janlekha, 1955, categorized families as 5% "one-person," 59% nuclear, 8% limited extended (including one or more parents of a spouse), 27% extended (including dependent married couples or other collateral relatives), and the temple residents. At least 32% of the families had inadequate or no land. His figures do not indicate the degree of domestic cooperation which was an ameliorating factor in well-being.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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121 remotely extended families, or with what L. M. Hanks [1959c] calls the
594 multi-local extended family, about which there is more below.)

591 The variations of the nuclear family, obviously excepting the monkhood,
594 arise primarily out of the large proportion of recently married couples who find it more expedient to continue living with one set of parents while accumulating funds for setting up their own independent households. In the case of one-person families, the variation arises when individuals are unable to live with their kin, are deserted by them, or have none. All the one-person families tend to be poor and are comprised largely of elderly people. In arrangements of the former type, there is a slight (five to three) tendency to matrilocality over patrilocality, and despite the intention of all concerned that the arrangements remain impermanent, there is considerable variability as to how long they are maintained. Analyzing a sample of 96 Bang Chan families, Janlekha found that although 30 percent came into being as nuclear families immediately after marriage, the balance underwent a period of residence with parents ranging from one to twenty years, the average being four years, with 16 percent never moving from the parents' home at all. Most cases of what Janlekha calls "limited extended families" result from a stem family inheritance pattern, although some entail elderly parents breaking up their households and moving in with the family of one of their mature children.

In addition to these basic variations, more accurately labeled "alternatives," there are several other variations of the nuclear family that occur with sufficient frequency to be noticed and at the same time are considered not at all unusual by the villagers themselves. Their significance for us is that they reveal what appears to be an almost nonchalant willingness or acquiescence on the part of the villagers to make modifications and adjustments in their living arrangements whenever necessary. Underlying this seems to be a fundamental assumption that the question of who lives with whom simply is not one of overriding importance: as long as individuals can live together without discord, act in terms of the household's established patterns of superordination and subordination, contribute labor or money to the family larder commensurate with their ages, and not inconvenience each other, they will be welcomed into the household; if unable or unwilling to fulfill such elementary obligations, they may take their leave, even if they are in fact full-fledged members of the nuclear family.

This rather flexible, or what the late John Embree would have called (1950) "loosely structured," approach to family organization is expressed in both centripetal and centrifugal ways.

596 Consonant with the fact that in all but the poorest Bang Chan families there is almost always enough rice to feed another mouth, it is common in

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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the village to find dependent relatives—siblings, cousins, nephews, nieces— 596
who, unable to make a go of it elsewhere, are accepted into a relative's family, sometimes to the extent of eventually taking over the headship of the family. Sometimes, on the initiative and invitation of an elderly or lonely relative, an entire nuclear family will be asked to take over or share a household. Children of poor or "inconvenienced" families (where a new 596
child is born before the first is weaned, where there are too many children 597
for the mother to handle comfortably, where a youngster is simply being "troublesome") are adopted or "borrowed" by other villagers for varying periods of time. This is done preferably by relatives, sometimes by neighbors, and often, in the case of boys, by the monastery, where the children become hand-servants to the monks and are supposed to absorb, by a kind of osmotic process, righteous ways of behaving. (Of my three male life history informants, two were given over to relatives at the ages of two, the third at the age of eight; one spent his childhood with four different families, another with five families; one describes his adolescence as "wandering from place to place." The psychological implications of such displacement should not be underestimated.) On occasion, two independent 596
nuclear families—almost always connected by some kinship tie—will join [594]
together for convenience to share cooking facilities, in which case they effectively become a single extended family. And in some cases, although rare, one will encounter adult children living in independent households but handing over their income to a parent, living in still another home, who disburses the proceeds when necessary.

On the other side, it is common practice in Bang Chan now for a 596
husband to be away for four or five months at a time earning money in 591
Bangkok, or during the dry season on a vegetable farm, returning home to [464]
visit his wife and children whenever opportunity permits, with or without funds. The wife may still maintain their household, but often returns to 596
live with her own parents.[7] In a similar vein, although obviously more 586
extreme, it is not unusual to find families in Bang Chan which have simply 182
"disintegrated," as the villagers say. Much depends here on the circumstances of family members. Bang Chaners usually reserve the term "disintegrated" for families that no longer have the economic wherewithal or justification for staying together as functioning units. In these instances, family members simply go their separate ways, if possible back to their families of orientation or to other relatives, husbands perhaps into the monkhood, and the children to whomever will take them. Most frequently, [578]
"disintegration" is characteristic of very poor families, and in the minds of

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[7] This pattern may be related to the old *corvée* labor pattern when able-bodied [466]
village men were away from their families for extended periods of time. [651]
[174]

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596 182 586 [578] [576] the villagers is contrasted with those cases of separation or divorce which are viewed as resulting more from social psychological reasons: arguments, contrariness, general incompatability, and wasting or not sharing money. The squandering of money is a most frequent cause of family discord contributing to family dissolution, especially when it involves the three aphoristic evils of Thai life: women, whiskey, and opium (although, in fact, I know of only two cases where Bang Chaners have been reputed to smoke opium).

586 595 Precise figures on the divorce or separation rate in Bang Chan are unknown, primarily because many marriages as well as divorces are never registered on the government rolls; also, many separations seem to follow an on-again-off-again pattern; the sanctioned occurrence of polygyny (only eight known cases out of the 296 families) and even polyandry (two known cases) complicates the problem even further. However, the fact that *four* [581] *months* after I had designated a sample of thirty families from which to select informants, six of those families, or 20 percent of the sample population, had dissolved would strongly suggest that Bang Chan families are not particularly stable.

593 586 183 The causes of family fission in these specific cases are unknown, but what is impressive is the apparent ease with which it takes place and the equanimity with which people seem to accept it. Other informants, reporting their own experiences or observations, discuss family breakups as if they were among the more normal events of the workaday world and completely understandable. They seem to be of no greater emotional import—in the sense of eliciting recognizable feelings of distress—than losing a good price on the sale of a piece of land or on the sale of some rice. In fact, the latter kinds of situations are considerably more likely to evoke expressions of hurt or exasperation. One repeatedly encounters in Bang Chan instances on the following order: a family breaks up simply because the husband has an inclination to work for a particular person whom he likes; a wife ("she is a touchy woman") runs away every time she has a minor disagreement with her husband (minor even by village standards, for example, "Should I buy my lottery tickets from Mr. X or Mr. Y?"; "Should we invite seven monks or ten monks to officiate at this ceremony?"). The point here is that these explanations—and the low tolerance for discord, the importance to a person of a boss or job over a spouse, the desire to be footloose, which they imply—are to the villagers completely reasonable justifications for the dissolution of family units.

174 594 596 Many of the family relationships referred to above as "centripetal" in nature are clearly related to or derived from patterns of social organization characteristic of an earlier Bang Chan. Although most evidence indicates that even in the years immediately following the settlement of the village in

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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the 1880's, the nuclear family was the primary social unit,[8] it is equally clear that extended family relations played a highly significant role—considerably more so than they do today—in the total life of the community. The precise nature of that role resists easy terminological formulation. In his reconstruction of the history of Bang Chan, L. M. Hanks (1959c) speaks of two types of "extended families" typical of early Bang Chan, one organized along lineal lines toward a single parent, and the other based on an alliance of siblings. In both cases, members of these groups assisted each other "by working in the fields, sharing food and equipment, helping with chores and celebrating special occasions together," and effectively formed what Hanks calls "extended family hamlets." These larger family units, however, were based on personal compatability, or in the case of the lineally oriented family, on the wealth and leadership of a particularly dynamic individual. They were never based on compelling structural characteristics such as corporate ownership of land or homes. Since many of the individual nuclear families were poor and trying to live off a land that was essentially a frontier, it made sense that they should join together or attach themselves to a wealthier, more powerful individual, and that the primary criterion for association should be the kinship tie with its built-in sentiments of affiliation, familiarity, and trust. However, since the basis of association here was at all times an economic-functional one—it was *reciprocal* and *mutual* benefits that brought people together, not an overriding ethic of familial solidarity—it might perhaps be better to think of such families as associations of "kindred" in the technical sense rather than

[8] Since almost all Thai history, by Thai or foreigners, is primarily a court history and concerned with activities of the kingdom at large or activities at the seat of power (where, of course, most of the literati, writers and readers, lived) there is little documentation on the history of the peasant family or any changes it might have gone through. Phya Anuman Rajadhon's profoundly knowledgeable, but highly idealized, essays on "ancient customs" of Thailand (Radjadhon ["Sathien Koset"] 1957 and Rajadhon 1954, 1958) contain references vaguely suggestive of an extended family system among peasants: "the house a groom built always had to be in the home compound of his father-in-law," for example, the time and effort demanded by house-building suggesting a high degree of permanency, the compound implying extended family unity. But the data are too meager and uneven to form the basis of anything more than speculation. On the other hand, comparative distributional data on other Thai-speaking peasants (P. K. Benedict 1943, Seidenfaden 1958); the great emphasis in traditional law, going back to the decrees of Rama Tibodi I in the mid-fourteenth century, on the absence of family responsibility in the commission of individual crime (Lingat 1936 and 1952); and the background commentary in Thailand's great multi-authored love epic of the late eighteenth–early nineteenth century, *Khun Chang and Khun Phaen*, all suggest that the peasant family has remained remarkably stable through the centuries as a nucleated, independently functioning unit linked to other families in the community by loose ties of kinship. The fact that family names did not come into use in Thailand until 1916, and then only by royal decree, further suggests that the extended family was never the major kinship unit.

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"extended families." The aim of all Bang Chan families even then was to attain a position in which they would be free from such obligations or would have other families dependent upon them.

In the intervening years the influx of new families into Bang Chan, the increased self-sufficiency of the individual nuclear families and, most important, the increased acceptance of commercial values, have served to break down kindred groups so that today few kinsmen work their fields together and even fewer share their food or equipment with one another, beyond what has been noted above. Perhaps the only remaining *universally* practiced function of the old kindred groups is the celebration of ceremonials involving members of the family, particularly cremations and ordinations, the cost and merit of which are shared among the participants, depending upon their wealth. Very often people do not want to borrow from or lend money or equipment to kinsmen precisely because the intrusion of the kinship tie makes the collection of such debts doubly awkward ("relatives take twice as long in repaying money; I do not want to lend anything to them"). However, the old forms have not been completely obliterated and when necessity requires or personal convenience moves an individual to look to others, the traditions of extended kinship, as indicated earlier, may be invoked.

For purposes of conceptual convenience, two types of kindred may be specified: the kind referred to above which involves kinsmen living in the village and to which Kaufman (1960) gives the name "spatially extended family"; and the type descriptive of relatives living outside Bang Chan, dispersed throughout other villages and provinces or in Bangkok, and called by Kaufman "the remotely extended family" and by L. M. Hanks (1959c) "the multi-local extended family." These terms are of course generic labels descriptive of actual or potential relationships between individuals, not of specifically delimited groups. Sometimes Bang Chaners attempt to extend the definition of the latter type of relationship to individuals who have never heard of them, but who may be in a position to help their son obtain a job in the city or get him admitted into a vocational school. Hanks has shown how the multi-local extended family has to a limited extent in recent years rejuvenated extended kinship ties by becoming the major institutional mechanism through which villagers leave Bang Chan to seek their fortunes elsewhere. (This last phrase is not merely a figure of speech; many young Bang Chan men have what could be called almost a Dick Whittington view about leaving Bang Chan for Bangkok.) A cousin who undertakes to serve as a villager's liaison to a city job or who offers him a place to stay usually does so willingly, for it creates obligations which may be called upon later if need be.

The above description of variations and extensions has been presented

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in some detail not only to indicate the complex reality of Bang Chan family organization, but to convey—it is hoped with some measure of success by my prolonged, but obviously incomplete, qualifications—some sense of the amorphous nature of village kinship structure. Actually, I feel that any attempt to bring descriptive order to Bang Chan kinship does violence, in the very process of ordering, to the reality of what is being described. This is said neither out of a sense of inadequacy nor apology, but simply to underscore the fact that kinship relationships in Bang Chan are considerably more unpredictable, inconsistent, and chaotic than our descriptive modes typically admit, and that any coherent discussion of them must unavoidably involve an element of reification.[9] Our categories above are by no means inaccurate in indicating functioning kinship units, but they communicate little of the fluidity and tenuousness characteristic of such units. Individuals of all ages recurringly move in and out of families; families splinter, in full or in part, sometimes permanently, but more frequently to be formed again with the same or new members. What is perhaps most distinctive of this flux is the sense of uncertainty that surrounds it—a state that is easily tolerated by the villagers. Often during the course of field work we would enter a home looking for a particular informant only to be told that he had left for Bangkok or for another

[9] L. M. Hanks (1959*b*: 1) has made a similar observation with regard to Thai social structure in general: "The Thai social scene at its most orderly moment seems to flaunt conventional Western requirements for organization and to travel always on the brink of social chaos. Every inclination of the student would give it more regularity. . . ." However, in seeking to account for such instability, Hanks points to such historical circumstances as the freeing of the slaves in 1905, reorganization of the government, the expansion of the population on the new land frontier, the new market economy, and the new ideas and gadgets introduced from the West. One might add the presence of Buddhism and its emphasis on change and impermanence as another contributing factor. I would agree that these social upheavals and the presence of the philosophy represented by the "Wheel of Law" have contributed to the instability of Thai social life, but there is more to it than that, at least with regard to the family. Such explanations simply do not account for cases of a family breaking up because its members accuse each other of stealing lost equipment (why the alternative, "let us look for the lost equipment," is so rarely raised is unknown); or of a father sending his eight- and six-year-old sons to live at the monastery and with relatives because his new wife is annoyed by them; or of the case cited by Hanks of the person who was abandoned by his mother at the age of three months when she ran away out of anger at her husband for taking a second wife, and who later went to live with his grandfather "because he had no one to take care of the buffalo." The point of course is that the primary and immediate factors at work here are psychological ones: an intense narcissism; an assumption that all human beings, even children, are responsible for themselves; a tendency to respond to social discord by rupture rather than an attempt to work it through; in the first example cited, an expectation that others cannot be trusted. The factors that in turn determine these characteristics are of course considerably more difficult to identify, although biographical data (Phillips 1959) suggest that the seeds of such traits are implanted early in the life-cycle.

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• 596 village; for how long his wife or child did not know: "maybe he will be back next week or next month; it is not certain." In a similar vein, we would encounter a youngster serving at the monastery, a week later working as a chore boy in someone's home, and a few months later living in still another home. And most fascinating of all are those seemingly amicable and placid families—and it should be remembered that Bang Chan is small enough, and in the daily round of life open and quiet enough, so that the slightest manifestation of family tension may easily become public knowledge—which suddenly split apart after a disagreement about something as inconsequential as a missing shirt. Here, the cause of fission is of course not the intrinsic importance of the missing item (although a white "city" shirt is expensive and does have symbolic significance), but rather the villagers' extraordinarily low tolerance for interpersonal conflict and the challenge to their pride: rather than permit the disagreement to mushroom into an emotionally expressive conflict, it is much easier to leave the field. Because the volatility of a dispute is what is often most feared, one rarely hears of any actual argument accompanying the disagreement; instead villagers say, "We had a few words and he left. That's all." [10]

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None of the above is meant to imply that family fissions are typical, in a statistical sense, of Bang Chan or even less that discord is what causes them. (Our concern with discord was simply to illustrate that villagers feel so strongly about it that when it occurs, they will take the most extreme measure to avoid it.) However, together with the separations that result from economic opportunities, "arrangements of convenience," and the desire to be footloose, they do occur frequently enough to exist as potentialities in the life of every family; when they happen they are not completely unexpected.

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These points have been raised primarily because Bang Chan is in fact a rather placid community, and in discussing kinship it is easy to mistake placidity for inertia, especially when our typical categories of description almost assume the latter state to be the case. However, accompanying this placidity is a kind of quiet dynamic resulting from 1,771 individualists—polite, gentle, non-aggressive, but nevertheless individualists—pursuing their own purposes. These pursuits do not preclude family obligations, loyalties, and love—Bang Chaners repeatedly speak and act in terms of repaying the love that their parents have given them; of repaying them for

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[171] [10] The desire to avoid emotional climax here seems very similar to what Bateson (1949: 40) found among the Balinese where, when individuals quarrel, there is an attempt at a "formal recognition of the state of their mutual relationship, and possibly, in some sort, a pegging of their relationship at that state . . . this method of dealing with quarrels would correspond to the substitution of a plateau for a climax." In Bang Chan, the "plateau" is achieved by having nothing to do with one's antagonist.

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bringing them into the world; of helping siblings because of the kind things they have done; of loving children so that they will care for them when they are old [11]—but they do condition how and when such sentiments will be expressed. It is difficult to recall any instance of a Bang Chaner being caught in a situation of which *he was aware of* a conflict between satisfying his own desires and fulfilling his obligations to kin, so it is difficult to say which sentiment would ordinarily take precedence in his own mind; but to an observer, it would seem that the former would most likely have priority. (See Hanks and Phillips 1961 for evidence in support of this point.) [12] Actually, most villagers seem eminently successful in keeping the sentiments apart, which helps to account in part for the "centripetal" forms of kinship arrangement referred to earlier. Self-interest is of course not the same as selfishness, and when circumstances and inclinations permit, Bang Chaners can become among the most generous and hospitable of people (and in no sense paradoxically). Rarely have I seen, for example, people derive so much genuine pleasure from doing favors for others. In fact, these are among the first things that one notices about them: free agents helping others—but also ignoring them—when they see fit.

[11] This phrasing here in terms of *reciprocal benefits* is in the villagers' idiom, not mine.

[12] It is not insignificant that nowhere in Thai folklore does one find a recognition of possible conflict between the motives of self-interest and family obligation or of any moral lesson to be drawn from it; that is, there are no stories of a parent sacrificing himself for his children, or of children for their parents or, for that matter, of any moral value at all in self-sacrifice. On the other hand, one does find stories of individuals in conflict over which of two self-satisfying alternatives to select. In *Khun Chang and Khun Phaen*, for example, Wan Thong, the inconstant lover, could not make up her mind between love and wealth, and eventually was slain because of her indecision, the moral being that the person who cannot make up his mind deserves nothing.

On a more realistic level, one rarely finds anyone in Bang Chan being condemned for self-interest—the mother who abandons her children or the gallivanting husband—although one very frequently does encounter sympathy for those who suffer, the sympathy being elicited by the person or the fact of suffering, not the cause. The majority of Bang Chaners generally consider the motives of the self-interested party as the person's own business. This concern with sympathy (*sonsaan*) for those in difficulty, and simultaneous indifference to the source of their problem has deep roots in Buddhist doctrine and should not be glossed over.

To have compassion (*mettaa* and *karunaa*) is among the noblest of Buddhist virtues. It is at one time a kindly expression of concern with others and a recognition of—or coming to terms with—what is considered intrinsic to the human situation. "Life is suffering" is the first of Buddhism's Four Noble Truths. However, since such suffering is intrinsic, there is little to be gained by assigning blame for it. Equally important, villagers assume that a person who suffers may well have brought it upon himself. The other person, acting in his own natural self-interest, may have simply been an agent or catalyst. His motives are his own business because they will eventually contribute, for better or worse, to his own denouement. The dynamics of these attitudes are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

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As the reader might by now suspect, it is not easy to determine the basis of the unity of the family. However, of all the factors that keep people living together in amity and affection, two come to the fore: a sense of love, obligation, and respect that is derived from the simple fact of kinship, but which must be continuously confirmed by mutual benefits; and economic considerations.

The economic foundation of the family is significant not only because the family is in fact the sole economic and occupational unit in the community (with the exception of the monkhood and school) but because the villagers themselves think of the family in terms of its economic functions. People say that they marry for wealth or because of the productive capacities of their spouses;[13] spouses stay together because the economic costs of a split are too great; most important of all, people are keenly *aware* of their economic interdependence. Fathers say that they need children to work in the fields and care for the buffalos, that a family needs a mother so that its members will be fed, that siblings are useful because it is easy to borrow from them (although, as noted earlier, some are unhappy about the intrusion of the kinship tie into what they regard to be a commercial transaction). Many villagers extend this economic, transactional type of thinking to other aspects of the kinship relationship. Thus they say that "the purpose of marriage is to have a companion who will take care of you when you get sick," or very frequently that "my parents went to the trouble of bringing me up so they would have a person to make merit for them when they die." The emphasis here is on independent agents serving each other because it is mutually beneficial.

The love and affection that people feel for each other is of course grounded in the close associations that one finds in most nuclear families. However, the attitudes of respect that one sees are perhaps more distinctively Thai. Almost all the literature on Thailand refers, at one point or another, to the patterns of respect (*khwaamnabthyy*) existing between people, both within and without the family. These patterns are based, in the first instance, on the status inequalities that exist in almost all social

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[13] In responding to the unstructured Sentence Completion Test item, "*He (she) wants to get a wife (husband) who. . . ,*" for example, thirty-one of sixty informants indicated that they wanted a mate who "was a good worker," "earned a living," "was rich," or otherwise had high socio-economic status. Only two persons said that they wanted a spouse for reasons that could be reasonably defined as sentimental: one woman wanted a husband who "would be a good friend with whom she could discuss things," and a man said he wanted a wife whom "he loved." Other informants gave completions distributed among a variety of categories: "polite, well-mannered, handsome, kind, strong, and good" spouses; and six women wanted husbands who would be faithful.

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she gives it to me." In describing his relationship with his maternal grandparents, with whom he spent all but two of the first twelve years of his life, this same person says:

> My younger sister and I were born one year after the other. So mother gave me to grandmother to be weaned. I lived with her until I became a novice at the monastery at the age of twelve. I lived with grandmother, so I loved grandmother and grandfather more. I loved grandmother even more than my own mother and father. Wherever grandfather and grandmother went, I went too. Grandmother loved me: she always gave me sweets and toys. I had everything I wanted because I was the only young thing in the house. She loved me. She was going to give her property to me, land and gold, as much as she was going to give to her own children. But it was only a promise. I got the gold, but not the land, because when grandmother died, grandfather got a new wife. She was young. . . . I didn't quite like her. The young woman was too economical. . . . Sometimes she prevented grandfather from buying good things for me. When grandfather was going to buy gold or anything for me, she stopped him. She wanted him to buy for her more than for his grandchild.

This excerpt, taken from the biography of one of the life history informants and comprising almost the complete portrayal of the relationship between the informant and the individuals with whom he spent the crucial years of his childhood, is by no means atypical. The point is that of all the myriad elements in the relationship, or of all the loving characteristics that in his eyes the grandparents had, he chose to emphasize only the material gifts they had given him as the measure of their love. Other informants are no different: one man said he knew his father did not love him because when he died he left the family home to the Buddhist monastery; and a woman said she admired her father because "when he died there was property left. He was a good man: he did not abandon his children. He was worried about them." (Her other reason for *admiring* him was that "he was the person who brought me into the world.")

The other major form of familial love is evidenced in the camaraderie, warmth, and generosity that surrounds the family in planning and accomplishing the various tasks associated with rice farming. As indicated earlier, the cultivation and harvesting of rice is not only an economic operation in Bang Chan, but almost a way of life. When villagers must deal with the very real and complex problems of planting and bringing in the harvest, all the individualistic propensities, and even to an extent the authority patterns, with which they normally indulge themselves recede before the coöperative requirements of the task at hand. In a very real sense the functional requirements of the economic activity, particularly during

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harvest time, serve to create a rite of intensification as family members decide together what work will be done by whom, arise early in the morning to work together happily in the fields—sometimes for as long as fourteen hours at a stretch—and actually see the fruits of their coöperative labor mount up on the threshing floors. The sense of familial solidarity and intradependence, and its associated feelings of love, is experienced by all.[18] Also, since harvesting more often than not involves working reciprocally with other families, the host of a reciprocal labor group giving a feast whenever possible at the end of the day, it serves, although to a lesser extent, to intensify feelings of membership in the larger community.

Summary

In my discussion of the "cultural background," I have dwelt primarily on kinship because the family is functionally the most significant social unit in the village and because it is within the context of kinship that personality is developed and, in Bang Chan, most frequently expressed. None of this is meant to imply a lack of importance for other social units—the monastery, the school, the state—or for the non-institutionalized relationships—friends, drinking partners, and business contacts. However, kinship does provide the basic psychological model for all human relationships in Bang Chan,

[18] Although the annual cycle of Thai peasants is described in detail in the available ethnographies on Thai rural life (deYoung 1955, Fraser 1960, Kaufman 1960, Kingshill 1960, Sharp *et al.* 1953) a few words should be added about the psychological dimensions of this cycle. Thus familial solidarity, intradependence, and love are not the only sentiments that are heightened during the harvest period. Perhaps the most striking quality of this season (December to January) is the increase in the optimism, joy, and general psychic well-being of the villagers: people laugh more loudly than usual; they relish telling about the things they are going to buy; parents take more kindly to the gallivanting of the children. These months contrast with transplanting time (late July to early August) and the period prior to harvest (October to November), when an overabundance of rain can destroy the villagers' rice seedlings or their entire crop. These latter periods are marked not so much by anxiety as by a sense of watchful waiting. All these contrast with the Dry season when things are especially quiet in Bang Chan and when villagers spend their time repairing farming equipment and houses, gossiping, or are working on jobs outside the community. Villagers say that of the three major seasons of the year (Dry, February to June; Rainy, June to January; Cold, January to February) they like the Rainy season best. The season coincides with the rice-growing cycle, is marked by Buddhist Lent and, excepting a final week of Monsoon downpour, is in fact the most comfortable period of the year.

These seasonal activities and attitudes also have direct implications for field work. Thus, while villagers gave freely of their time during the dry season and after the harvest, and during the latter were especially outgoing and benign, many simply would not see me during the weeks of planting and harvesting. The benign attitudes of villagers interviewed after the harvest were reflected directly in the data, as were the noncommittal responses of some villagers who were interviewed during transplanting time.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

596 602 *156 [609] and not only in the abstract, symbolic sense. Non-kin are approached in the hope that they eventually may be treated as kin; good government officials are unabashedly described as being like "good fathers"; the basic patterns of respect that are learned and practiced in the family are extended to relationships outside of it, although inevitably in more formal ways. There is no *rigid* psychological cleavage between the sentiments of kinship and the sentiments about individuals outside of the family. Conversely the mere fact of kinship does not assure that individuals will be given special emotional treatment: often the love between friends is greater than the love between kin (see the case of "Dang," his father, and father's friends in Hanks and Phillips 1961, or the case cited earlier of the man who left his wife because of his fondness for an employer). Kinship represents to the villager relationships of warmth, familiarity, and conviviality, but also unpredictability and undependability. Such is the nature of most human contact in Bang Chan.

596 602 609 *156 [592]

621 596 [662] In this type of cultural situation, one does *not* find arising the type of community power struggles or schisms apparently characteristic of many peasant communities (see Foster 1960–61). Bang Chan is indeed a placid community because no family has the organizational means or the quality of familial cohesiveness necessary to assume a dominant social, political, or economic position. Individuals assume important positions and individuals disagree and squabble, but rarely families. In surveying the cultural landscape of Bang Chan, I often wondered whether the basic unit of anthropological and sociological, as well as psychological, analyses was perhaps not the individual rather than the family, monastery, school, or village itself.

*156

7: Janlekha X-4,5 (1948-1953)1956 AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bangchan

592 do not share the same arrangements for preparing and consuming food.

621 59 [792] The 298 families living in Bangchan on May 23, 1953 may be grouped into five categories: (1) "One-person household" consisting of a lone man or woman /for ease in typological manipulation we arbitrarily consider this as a family, although strictly speaking a one-person household is not a family/; (2) "Nuclear family" consisting of a man and wife and their unmarried children; (3) "Limited extended family" consisting of a man and wife, either or both their sets of parents, and their unmarried children; (4) "Extended family" consisting of those included in "limited extended family" plus married children and children of the latter, plus any collateral relatives of any generation; and (5) "Ecclesiastical family" consisting of Buddhist priests, novices, and temple boys, all males, living together in the temple under the Headpriest's supervision. The distribution of these different types of families so defined is shown in Table 3.

592 596 621 Further explanation is perhaps necessary with respect to the "extended families" in Table 3. It must be pointed out that the term 'extended' is here used for the sole purpose of defining types of families which include dependent married couples as differentiated from the ordinary independent nuclear family. It will be seen in the next section, however, that there is no permanency in this inclusion of married couples whose intention is always to establish an independent family of their own. The so-called 'extended' family in

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 63]